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SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTING THE DARFUR PEACE AGREEMENT: TROUBLES
IN BIRMAZZA

REF: NDJAMENA 706

11. (SBU) Summary: Differing reports are coming in about a clash between SLM forces near Birzamma in Sudan across the frontier from Chadian border town of Bahai. SLM leader Minni Minawi accused opponents of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) of initiating the attack with some Chadian supporters complicit in the action. JEM leader Khalil denied involvement or even awareness of the engagement. President Deby's half-brother Daoussa Deby as well as SLM breakaway members blamed it on Minni's efforts to use force against groups who refuse to join the agreement. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Shortly before his departure from N'Djamena for Tripoli early on May 24, SLM's Minni Minawi called the Ambassador to report that at least 20 vehicles were on their way into Darfur to attack his forces near Birzamma. He said the convoy had crossed the border at Bahai and was preparing to launch their attack later on May 24. In a subsequent call from Tripoli later in the day, Minni confirmed the arrival of the vehicles near Birzamma. He said he had told his forces not to attack. But if they were the ones attacked, he warned, there could be civil war.

13. (SBU) According to Minni, the operation was organized by the JEM's Dr. Khalil Ibrahim and the SLM splinter faction under Dr. Sharif Harir, with support from Daoussa Deby, President Deby's influential half brother. He said he had confronted Daoussa Deby about the matter and was told by Daoussa that his forces would be attacked because Minni had signed an agreement with the Sudanese government. Minni believed the offensive against his positions was part of a campaign to keep the Zaghawas fighting against Khartoum. Minni said he had raised his concerns with President Deby and that President Deby had said he would give orders to stop it. In reality, Minni believed, President Deby was playing a double game and was actually complicit in the operation.

14. (SBU) Over the next 12 hours, the Ambassador raised the matter with Chadian Foreign Minister Allam-mi, Dr. Khalil Ibrahim of JEM, and Dr. Sharif Harir of the SLM splinter group that has refused to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). Foreign Minister Allam-mi disclaimed knowledge of the reports. He said President Deby had urged JEM's Khalil Ibrahim to sign the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). He shrugged his shoulders when asked if Deby's family was fully behind the agreement, but commented that mistrust over Sudan's intentions made it difficult for Chadians to believe Sudan was serious about implementing the DPA.

15. (SBU) In a two-hour meeting largely concerning his views on the DPA (septel), Khalil claimed he was not aware of reports of any problems near Birzamma. He said he would have no interest in attacking Minni's forces in the area. He argued, however, that JEM would defend itself if attacked.

16. (SBU) Daoussa Deby was aware of clashes involving Minni's

forces, but attributed them to a mutiny involving supporters of the SLM factions close to Abdelwahid and Khammis. He said the conflict arose from Minni's declaration that his forces would serve as the police for Darfur. Daoussa claimed that Minni should be encouraging the non-signers to cooperate with the DPA, rather than threatening them with force. He dismissed claims of any Chadian involvement or support in the fighting near Birmazza.

¶7. (SBU) SLA faction leaders Sharif and Shogar described a clash outside Birzamma the morning of May 24 between Minni's and Khammis's forces which had resulted in defeat for Minni's forces. According to Sharif, the fight was provoked by Minni's intention to use force against non-signers of the DPA. Sharif denied that the GOC was assisting SLM groups against Minni. However, he feared that Minni's strong-arm tactics would lead to violence among the Zaghawa and civil war in Darfur for years to come.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: It is virtually impossible here to sort through the credibility of these differing versions of this event. They nonetheless underline sharply the mistrust among the parties and the challenges facing efforts to implement the DPA. End Comment.
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